



## Exposure to hurricane-related stressors and mental illness after Hurricane Katrina

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### Abstract:

CONTEXT: Uncertainty exists about the prevalence, severity, and correlates of mental disorders among people exposed to Hurricane Katrina. OBJECTIVE: To estimate the prevalence and associations between DSM-IV anxiety-mood disorders and hurricane-related stressors separately among prehurricane residents of the New Orleans metropolitan area and the remainder of the areas in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi affected by Katrina. DESIGN: Community survey. SETTING and PARTICIPANTS: A probability sample of 1043 English-speaking prehurricane residents of the areas affected by Hurricane Katrina was administered via telephone survey between January 19 and March 31, 2006. The survey assessed hurricane-related stressors and screened for 30-day DSM-IV anxiety-mood disorders. MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES: The K6 screening scale of anxiety-mood disorders and the Trauma Screening Questionnaire scale for posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), both calibrated against blinded structured clinical reappraisal interviews to approximate the 30-day prevalence of DSM-IV disorders. RESULTS: Prehurricane residents of the New Orleans metropolitan area were estimated to have a 49.1% 30-day prevalence of any DSM-IV anxiety-mood disorder (30.3% estimated prevalence of PTSD) compared with 26.4% (12.5% PTSD) in the remainder of the sample. The vast majority of respondents reported exposure to hurricane-related stressors. Extent of stressor exposure was more strongly related to the outcomes in the New Orleans metropolitan area subsample than the remainder of the sample. The stressors most strongly related to these outcomes were physical illness/injury and physical adversity in the New Orleans metropolitan area subsample and property loss in the remainder of the sample. Sociodemographic correlates were not explained either by differential exposure or reactivity to hurricane-related stressors. CONCLUSIONS: The high prevalence of DSM-IV anxiety-mood disorders, the strong associations of hurricane-related stressors with these outcomes, and the independence of sociodemographics from stressors argue that the practical problems associated with ongoing stressors are widespread and must be addressed to reduce the prevalence of mental disorders in this population.

**Source:** <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2174368>

### Resource Description

#### Communication:

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

A focus of content

# Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

## **Communication Audience:**

audience to whom the resource is directed

Health Professional, Public

## **Exposure :**

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Extreme Weather Event, Human Conflict/Displacement

**Extreme Weather Event:** Hurricanes/Cyclones

## **Geographic Feature:**

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Ocean/Coastal

## **Geographic Location:**

resource focuses on specific location

United States

## **Health Impact:**

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Injury, Mental Health/Stress

**Mental Health Effect/Stress:** Stress Disorder

## **Medical Community Engagement:**

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

## **Mitigation/Adaptation:**

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

**Population of Concern:** A focus of content

## **Population of Concern:**

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Low Socioeconomic Status

**Other Vulnerable Population:** People with mental disorders

## **Resource Type:**

format or standard characteristic of resource

# Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

Research Article

## **Resilience:**

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

## **Timescale:**

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

## **Vulnerability/Impact Assessment:**

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content